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CURRENT APPRAISAL OF THE CIVIL DEFENSE
SHELTER PROGRAM IN THE USSR

5 November 1957

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FOREWORD

The attached report has been prepared by the Office of Research and Reports, CIA, and has not been coordinated with other IAC agencies. This brings up to date the summary and conclusions expressed in CIA/RR 84, Civil Defense in the USSR, published on 30 November 1956.

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SHELTER PROGRAM IN THE USSR

Civil Defense -- General

The USSR has an active and extensive civil defense system. In the early postwar years, civil defense was relatively dormant. However, in 1949, the program began moving ahead; specifically, steps were taken to improve its organization, to undertake defensive construction, and to increase training. A definite acceleration in Soviet civil defense has occurred since 1954, accompanied by more publicity and emphasis on defense against nuclear weapons.

Civil defense, as an integral part of over-all Soviet air defense, is the responsibility of the Main Administration of Local Anti-Air Defense (GUMPVO), an arm of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). Under GUMPVO is a body of MPVO (civil defense) staff officers who are assigned to posts at all levels of government. MPVO officers are also present in many major enterprises, supervising civil defense preparations in large factories, ports, railroad centers, and other key installations.

The Soviet system provides specialized training for civil defense personnel and survival training for the general population. A school for civil defense staff officers is operated in Leningrad. GUMPVO maintains a Central Scientific Laboratory and a medical research installation. These two installations undoubtedly develop techniques and materials for civil defense.

The Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force, and Navy (DOSAAF) is the organization charged with giving civil defense training to the general population. This organization is closely linked to the MPVO system. DOSAAF organizations are formed in factories, institutions, offices, collective and state farms, machine tractor stations, schools, and dwelling units. Its membership is estimated to be about 30 million at the present time. Most of its members are probably under compulsory enrollment in a civil defense training course, which includes general knowledge of civil defense, including alarm signals; types of attack; gas defense and decontamination; first aid; atomic and biological defense instruction; and fire-control measures.

First-aid training is conducted by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Members of these societies would be used extensively as auxiliary personnel for medical organizations which have civil defense roles.

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Air-Raid Shelters -- General

By 1949 the USSR had initiated a program to include air raid shelters in the construction of new public buildings, factories, schools, and apartment dwellings. Reports of returning prisoners of war who worked on such construction indicate that the inclusion of air-raid shelters in new buildings has been a standard practice. Many of these reports described basement shelters as having sufficient strength to withstand the complete collapse of buildings. The shelters, designed to be gasproof, are fitted with hermetically sealed double doors. They are constructed to utilize filter ventilating systems, but most reports do not indicate actual installation, either because such systems were to be installed later by Soviet workers or because installation has been deferred to a later date. The construction of such shelters is continuing at the present time, and the population has been advised that they are satisfactory protection against atomic weapons.

While it is obviously impossible to know the precise extent of the Soviet shelter program, it is believed that most state-owned housing of masonry construction built since 1951 included some provision for shelter. On the assumption that all such housing included shelters, this program could now afford some protection to about one-sixth of the urban population and this ratio could rise to about one-third by the end of 1960. In addition, there are shelters in factories and public buildings, but no estimate of their capacity is available. A 1956 Soviet publication as well as information on shelter-building activities in the European Satellites indicate that heavier bunkers and hillside tunnel shelters have been designed.

In several of the European Satellites construction of hillside tunnels, and heavy above- and below-ground concrete bunkers has been confirmed. These installations are generally constructed at factories and enterprises of military importance and in proximity to Party and government offices or to transport and communications centers. In addition, some protected control centers have been prepared outside urban areas. For example, there are several confirmed locations of underground facilities near Sofia which are reportedly designated for the use of the Bulgarian government in an emergency. Inasmuch as the Satellite civil defense preparations follow the Soviet model, it is believed that the Kremlin has already constructed or is now providing similar installations in the USSR to protect essential elements of the Party and Government, the transportation and communications network, and workers in vital industries. The same general type of protection is probably being afforded civil defense headquarters, important telecommunications terminal facilities, and some radiobroadcasting installations.

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The fact that urban and industrial fire-fighting forces are subordinate to the MVD should facilitate their integration into the MPVO system. Fire prevention has been stressed in the USSR, and the new emphasis on concrete construction should gradually reduce vulnerability to fire. The prevalence of wooden construction, however, is still a menace in urban areas.

Development of Civil Defense and the Shelter Program

Civil defense preparation in the USSR has increased since 1949. Post-war training for civil defense began in 1949-50, with emphasis on the preparation of instructors. The years from 1950 to 1952 were marked by construction of basement-type air-raid shelters, by the publication of at least three civil defense manuals, and by the formation of DOSAAF from existing paramilitary societies. Some civil defense training had already been carried out by the paramilitary societies and in 1952 air and chemical defense study circles were made mandatory in all DOSAAF primary units. In 1953 a new chairman was appointed for DOSAAF, and a heavy recruiting drive was initiated which virtually compelled participation by members of the Komsomol. Air and chemical defense training was made compulsory for all DOSAAF members. In 1954 limited information on atomic warfare was first released in open publications. According to an announcement issued after an unusual plenary session of DOSAAF, the provision of modern air defense training for the entire population was made a high-priority goal. Civil defense activity reached a high level in 1955 and 1956 when the need for improved civil defense was stressed publicly by Soviet leaders and training was instituted for defense against atomic and bacteriological weapons.

Information gained during 1957 confirms the emphasis on civil defense preparations as well as the readjustments toward the nuclear concept of air defense. Hungarian refugees have reported extensively on heavy bunker and gallery type shelters constructed in that country between 1952 and 1956. British engineers reported that new extensions of the Moscow subway continue to be built at great depth for no apparent reason other than possible use for civil defense. New manuals, films, and television broadcasts on nuclear civil defense subjects appeared during 1957. Completion of the initial atomic defense training program of the Soviet population was announced. Although it is doubtful that all citizens have been indoctrinated under the program, training has probably been widespread in DOSAAF, in the Communist Party and in key industries. To supplement the earlier air and chemical defense course and the atomic defense course, every citizen of the USSR over 16 years of age is to receive 22 hours of instruction in a new course in air defense, including atomic, bacteriological and chemical (ABC) defense. Such training is to be completed in

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large cities by mid-1958 and in the remaining cities and villages by the end of 1958. After an absence of about six years, mention of civil defense (MPVO) offices and personalities has reappeared in the popular press. Organization and training of national guard-type civil defense troops has taken place in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and it is therefore probable that the USSR has taken similar steps. Polish officers were reportedly being trained for this type operation at the Leningrad MPVO school, which further reflects the parallel nature of Soviet and Satellite programs.

At least two other important Soviet developments during 1957 have civil defense implications, although they were announced to be primarily for administrative, economic, or social reasons. The partial decentralization of industrial and governmental control in the USSR may improve civil defense organization and operations by permitting better integration of civil defense groups at the local level. The second development is the decision to construct a ring highway around Moscow and to construct by-pass telecommunications lines around certain major cities. Ring telecommunications and transport routes around major cities have definite passive defense value.

SUMMARY

Some firm conclusions and others which border on speculation may be drawn from Soviet preparations for civil defense. Foremost among the firm conclusions is that the leaders of the USSR have initiated a widespread and presumably costly effort to develop civil defense in the Soviet Bloc. Whether the initiation of this effort is inspired by actual fear of attack from the West or by a Soviet intention to initiate war cannot be determined. In either event, the widespread and developing civil defense system improves the defensive posture of the USSR and the European Satellites. The Soviet willingness to devote great effort and considerable sums of money to civil defense is shown by the training of millions of people and by a widespread program of shelter construction. This effort is facilitated by central planning, direction, and financing of construction, and by compulsory enrollment and training of personnel.

The second firm conclusion about Soviet civil defense is that until 1954 it was apparently directed against attack with high explosives rather than with atomic weapons. At the present time, both the atomic and biological aspects of civil defense are being accented. The general population, however, still must rely on relatively light local shelters. Some heavy shelters have undoubtedly been prepared, but these are not believed to be adequate for more than selected control elements of the government. The fact that evacuation or dispersal of the general population has not

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been publicly mentioned in the USSR is not conclusive evidence that plans along this line are not being prepared. If the USSR adopted a policy of evacuation, the civil defense staff, closely allied with the extensive nationwide police structure, would greatly facilitate its execution. The millions of DOSAAF members, who have had military and civil defense training, would be available for duty as auxiliary control personnel.

The structure of civil defense in the European Satellites as well as their civil defense training and related measures indicates that the Soviet pattern is being closely followed. Substantial progress has been made since 1950, particularly in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and recently increased civil defense activity has become apparent in Poland, Rumania, and East Germany.

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